

Grazing Alfalfa: Producer Perspective

Bob Hall

Scott County native Robert (Bob) Hall, Jr. is a man of many hats. He and his wife Bonnie have embarked on many ventures on their farm including sheep, hogs and tobacco. Hall was born and raised on the farm outside of Georgetown, where he currently resides and operates a stocker operation. Some may recognize Hall for the feed mill he purchased in the 1960's known as Hallway Feeds. Early in the Mill's history over 90 percent of their sales were to dairy producers. Now 95 percent of company's sales go to the equine industry. Hallway Feed is sold and distributed to racetracks around the globe. Hallway Feed has fed a total of 18 Kentucky Derby winners over the years, including the 2015 Triple Crown Winner, American Pharoah.

While Hall is most notably known for building Hallway Feed, he is also known regionally for his cattle and pasture management skills. Hall has always tried to utilize grazing to get the most out of the cattle on his farm. His 110 acre farm is divided into 17 paddocks and have a variety of forage mixes in the pastures including orchard grass, alfalfa, bluegrass, red clover, and tall fescue. There are three water pens strategically located throughout the farm to provide water to each of the paddocks. In a typical year Hall grazes the farm with two groups of cattle. One group of 130-135 head that are rotated every three days. A second smaller group of 65-70 head are rotated through a different portion of the farm every five to seven days depending on the forage production. Hall says, "When evaluating your pastures and you think you have another day, it's time to move them." Additionally, cattle are not moved into new pasture prior to five in the afternoon in an attempt to alleviate bloat "because the cattle are already full."

When it comes to managing his pastures Hall employs several practices to provide the best forage possible for his animals. No grasses are allowed to go to seed on the farm in an effort to keep them vegetative and keep quality higher. Cattle rotation in combination with pasture clipping at certain times of the year helps keep the grasses growing. Also, by incorporating herbicide with the active ingredients Aminopyralid (4) and Metsulfuron (2) into his management system recently, Hall has been able to reduce weeds and suppress fescue seed head production in his pure grass pastures. Additionally, he clips all pastures soon after they are grazed. "My feeling is that if they don't eat something the first time, they won't eat it a month later when it gets more mature and tougher." Hall also makes a point to graze his alfalfa once a month and has not had any bloat problems for a number of years.

Bob is dedicated to continuing to improve his operation and has attended both the Kentucky Grazing School and Advanced Grazing School put on by the Master Grazer Program. If you would like to learn more about his operation, including his cattle health protocol, cattle purchasing

philosophy, and more, follow the link to the UK Ag video interview:
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N4FK20YFfdU&feature=youtu.be.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N4FK20YFfdU&feature=youtu.be)